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SOURCES OF AMERICAN DISCONTENT.

Communication to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,
Wednesday, January 13, 1932.

By H. ADDINGTON BRUCE.

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2. BRIDGMAN, P. W.—Physical Properties of Single Crystal Magnesium pp. 29-41. January, 1932 \$0.40.
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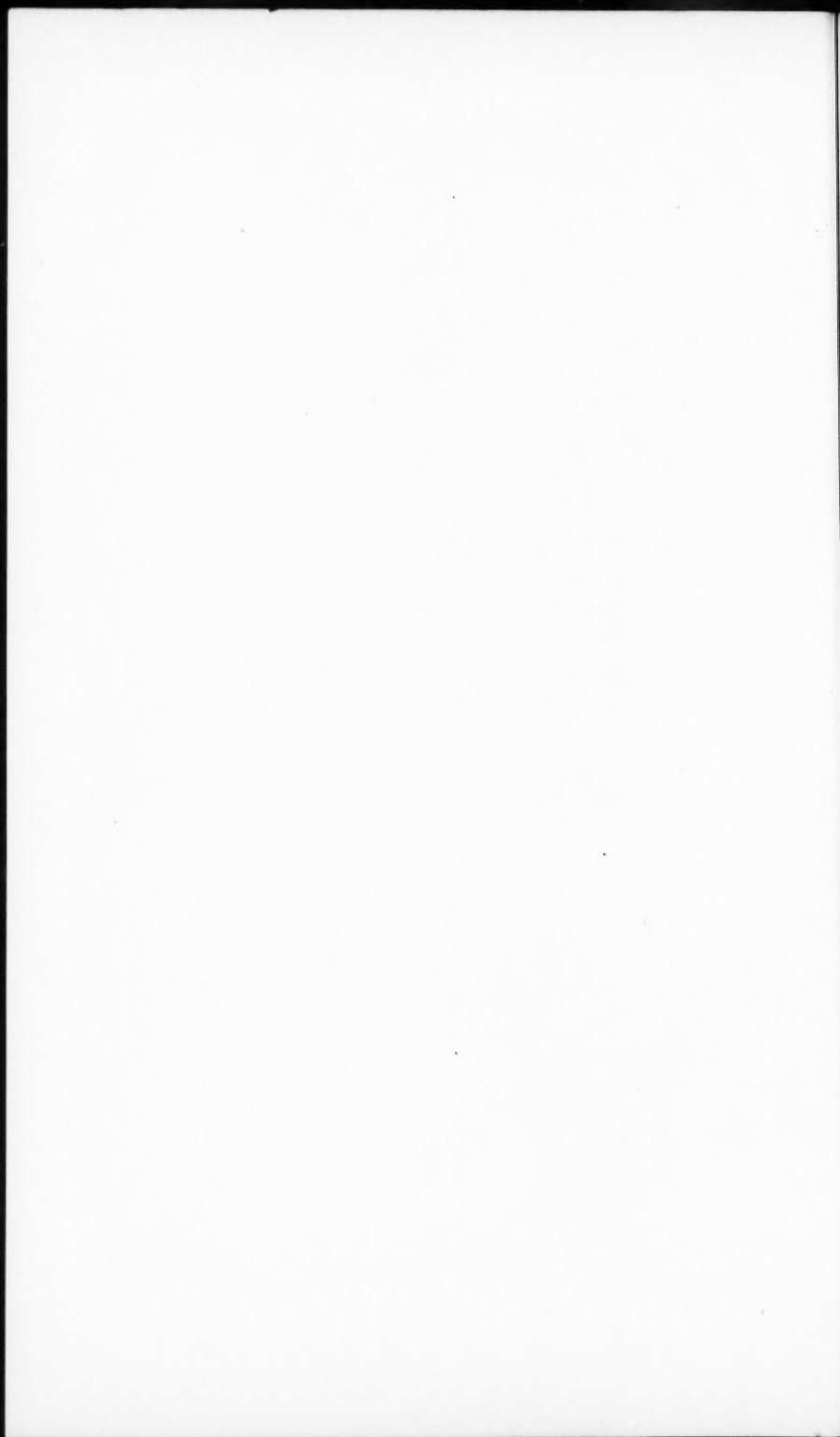
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ON the eve of the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century an Englishman, James F. Muirhead, wrote a first-class book on the United States under the suggestive title, *The Land of Contrasts*. Were Mr. Muirhead writing his book to-day he would find still stronger justification for the title he selected. And were he writing it in the light of present scientific understanding of the forces governing human behavior, he would find the sharpest contrast of all in the paradox of the richest land in the world being at the same time the land of greatest discontent.

It is this despite the fact of the comparative freedom of the United States from the obvious, surface indications of social discontent—such indications as popular complaint and agitation for governmental change and for changes in the social structure. At the moment, to be sure, there is not a little complaining, as a consequence of the financial depression and widespread unemployment. But with the return of material prosperity, complaint and agitation will once more subside, thereby giving the politician renewed opportunity to “point with pride” to the fortunate state of the American people; who, nevertheless, will remain harried by a discontent far more mischievous than that which finds expression in mere complaint and agitation.

For it is a great mistake to assume, as many besides politicians still assume, that social discontent has its sources solely, or mainly, in economic, financial, or governmental conditions, and that it inevitably waxes or wanes with the character of these. This might perhaps be logically maintained if to complain and to agitate were the only and invariable manifestations of discontent, and were confined to the so-called poor and underprivileged. But it is noticeable that the poor and the underprivileged often accept their disadvantages in a curiously cheerful as well as philosophic spirit, while there may be much complaining among even the uncommonly well-to-do and privileged. More than this, as revealed by everyday observation and psychological research, well-to-do and poor alike, privileged and underprivileged, with or without a word of complaint, may be impelled by sheer discontent to all manner of aberrant behavior.

We find discontented of all classes turning to strong drink as an anodyne for the discontent that oppresses them; or, for the same

purpose, becoming addicted to the use of narcotic drugs. We find them lapsing into immoral, even criminal ways of living. We find them, again under the stress of their discontent, hurrying to divorce courts, flocking to the consulting-rooms of nerve specialists, helping to swell the population of hospitals for the mentally diseased. Finally, when discontent is so extreme that life itself seems no longer tolerable, we find them committing suicide.

This is not to say that the social evils denoted by the terms vice, crime, divorce, nervous disease, mental disease, and suicide are wholly the product of discontent. But it is to say that discontent so commonly underlies them and is manifested by them that a country in which they are rife is essentially a discontented country. It remains in this category so long as it is beset by social evils, no matter what the national wealth or the status of its people with regard to institutional advantages. On this basis an appalling statistical array bears evidence to the prevalence of discontent in the United States; and, further, the story the statistics tell is of a rise in the occurrence-curve of social evils side by side with the rise in the curve of the nation's wealth. Seemingly, the richer we grow, the more discontented we become.

Take the evidence from the occurrence-curve of suicide. Whether the times have been "good" or "bad" this has risen pretty steadily. It took a sharp turn upward during the "depression" year 1921, when it rose from a total of 8,959 known suicides for the registration area of the United States in 1920 to a total of 11,136, or from 10.2 per 100,000 population to 12.6. This was popularly attributed to the strain of the economic situation, and even so experienced a student of suicide as Dr. Harry M. Warren, President of the Save-a-Life League, organized expressly to combat suicide, ventured the prediction:

"With improved business, which is sure to come, the suicide rate will be reduced and prosperity and happiness will return."¹

For 1922 and 1923 there was a slight reduction, and while the rate rose again in 1924 it still was somewhat below that of 1921. But note what followed, coincident with the full development of the so-called Coolidge prosperity period. In 1926, 1927, and 1928, years of peak wages and peak dividends, years when politicians did not hesitate to suggest that we were in sight of the day when poverty might be abolished from the land, the suicide rate rose to 12.8, 13.3, and 13.6 per 100,000 population, with a total of 15,566 known suicides in 1928. These figures are taken from tabulations by the United States Census

Bureau. In 1929, according to figures assembled by Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, there was a further rise to 17,000 known suicides, while in 1930, again according to Dr. Hoffman, the suicide total for the country was more than 18,000, or more than twice the total of ten years earlier.²

With regard to the occurrence of mental disease in the United States we again have a sorry record of a rising rate.

In 1880, or about fifty years ago, 31,973 persons were under treatment in State hospitals for the mentally diseased, or at a rate of 63.7 per 100,000 population. By 1904 the total had risen to 129,222, a rate of 158 per 100,000 general population. In 1928, the latest year for which I have Census Bureau statistics, there were no fewer than 264,226 mentally diseased persons in State hospitals, the rate then being 221.4 per 100,000 population, as against the 63.7 rate of 1880, when the total population of State hospitals for the mentally diseased was only 31,973.

That these figures indicate the actual rate of increase in mental disease in the United States during the past fifty years may properly be questioned, as it is questioned in a governmental bulletin issued in 1930. "The tremendous increase during the past generation in the numbers of mental patients receiving hospital treatment," the official comment runs, "has been largely the result of better methods of treatment, increased hospital facilities, and increased willingness on the part of relatives and friends of mental cases to utilize the hospitals to care for such patients."³

This is doubtless true, but it cannot safely be advanced, as it has been advanced by some, to support a claim that there has been only a seeming increase in mental disease in the United States. Nearly a quarter of a century ago I made for *The North American Review*⁴ a study of the Census Bureau's statistics for mental disease at that time, and precisely the same objection was then raised to any suggestion that mental disease was increasing in this country at a rate beyond the rate of increase in the general population. Obviously such an objection would to-day be more impressive were it now being raised for the first time. In any case, that there has been an actual not merely a seeming increase is definitely shown by the findings of a survey undertaken in 1929 by the American Medical Association. As summarized in the bulletin of the Illinois State Department of Public Health, May 1, 1930, these findings show:

"During the two years ended with 1929 the number of hospital patients in the United States suffering from mental and nervous dis-

orders increased 13 per cent. All other types of hospital patients increased less than 3 per cent. in number. The general population of the country increased from an excess of births over deaths by about 2 per cent. Thus it appears that the prevalence of mental and nervous incapacity is increasing at a rate over four times greater than that of all other kinds of illness which requires hospital care, and at a rate over six times greater than the rate of increase in population from natural sources."⁵

And, from comment in the American Medical Association's own *Journal*, for March 29, 1930:

"There are just nine more nervous and mental institutions than there were two years ago, but in that period their total capacity has increased from 373,364 to 414,386, and the average number of patients and inmates has grown in the same period from 349,667 to 395,407. If the present rate continues, and there is no apparent reason for thinking it will not, by 1934 we will have more than one-half million persons in our nervous and mental institutions. This situation most seriously challenges the Government and the people of the United States."

According to the psychiatrist Karl A. Menninger, "Statistics say that one out of every twenty of us is, or has been, or will be, in a hospital for mental illness."⁶ Writing somewhat earlier, Stewart Paton, of Princeton University, estimated that one of every five or six persons in a civilized community is afflicted in some degree with some form of nervous disorder.⁷ The annual economic loss from nervous and mental disease in the United States to-day is incalculable (estimates have been given ranging from a minimum of \$300,000,000 to a maximum of more than \$2,200,000,000) and the burden on the American taxpayer tremendous. The maintenance cost of State hospitals alone is more than \$75,000,000 a year;⁸ and all the while old hospitals have to be enlarged and new ones constructed. In Massachusetts almost twenty cents of every tax dollar spent by the State goes for the care and housing of the mentally diseased and the mentally deficient;⁹ and the Massachusetts spending for this purpose is not exceptionally heavy as compared with that of other States.

Turn now to divorce. If the increase in nervous and mental disease constitutes a situation that "most seriously challenges the Government and people of the United States," what are we to say of the situation created by the increase in divorce? Here there cannot be any quibbling as to whether the increase is seeming or actual.

Twenty years ago, when I had occasion to make a study of marriage failure in the United States, I found that nine of every 100 marriages terminated in divorce. Twenty years before that, according to divorce court statistics collected by the Federal Government, only six of every 100 marriages were ended by divorce. To-day divorce writes finis to seventeen of every 100 marriages, or a ratio nearly three times that of forty years ago.⁹ Nor do divorce court statistics by any means tell the whole story of marriage failure. Many marriages culminate in voluntary separation, in desertion by husband or wife, even in the tragedy of murder by husband or wife. No complete statistical record is available of these other climaxes of marriage failure and of its sad sequel the broken home.

What of the children in the broken home? It is significant that recent studies of convicted criminals by Cooley, Glueck, and others, show that an average of 50 per cent. of prison inmates were as children bereft of one of their parents by death, desertion, or divorce. There are indeed many prison inmates in the United States to-day, so many that, as you know, prison construction is feverishly under way in the effort to lessen the evils—including prison riots—of overcrowding. Also, as in the case of hospitals for nervous and mental diseases, prison facilities are increasingly in demand. Twenty-five years ago the population of Federal and State prisons and reformatories was at the rate of about 70 per 100,000 general population. At the opening of 1929, the latest year for which I have governmental figures, the prison population in the United States was at the rate of nearly 100 per 100,000 general population. Nor does this take any account of inmates of city or county jails and workhouses.¹⁰

Prison statistics, of course, provide no sure measurement of the prevalence of crime. Particularly is this true of countries which, like the United States, send men and women to prison for behavior in no wise considered criminal in other lands. Yet, when we rigorously allow for this, and give heed only to offenses (against person or property) universally accepted as being criminal in character, the conclusion does seem unavoidable that crime, like other social evils, is increasing in our country. At all events, it now constitutes an intolerable strain on American social life, with a known murder occurring every forty-five minutes and the annual cost of crime in the United States running into the billions of dollars. No other country presents quite so dismal a picture in this respect.

In fact, with regard to social evils in general the situation in the United States as compared with that in other countries must be

described as "markedly bad," to use the phrase applied by one American sociologist in comparing our crime situation with the crime situation elsewhere.¹¹ And the puzzling thing is that, while the occurrence-curve of social evils in general has been rising most rapidly here, it has risen in spite of the fact that in no other land has there been such organized effort to improve conditions. Here juvenile courts, child guidance clinics, habit clinics, psychopathic institutes, mental hygiene associations and other agencies for nipping social evils in the bud, have been at work to an extent not surpassed in any other country. But the greater the service they have rendered, the greater has grown the need for them to render service. Evidently there has been widespread failure to reckon with some influence specially provocative in the United States of growing discontent, with its varied manifestations in the social evils.

What is this influence? My own studies, carried through a long period of years, leave no doubt in my mind that it emanates from our excessive industrialization, which, while it has made us enormously wealthy as a nation, has been a disturbing factor in various ways.

For one thing, our excessive industrialization has led to a rapid and extreme shifting of the population from rural to urban life, with all the psychological ill effects of crowding. For another thing, it has caused, as a national trait, overemphasis on the importance of material goods, with a consequent dimming and lowering of national ideals and personal standards. And for still another thing, as national wealth has grown and the pursuit of wealth become more intense, there has been an unfortunate narrowing down of life activities in the interest of business-doing and the gaining of comforts and pleasures. As I see it, each of these consequences of excessive industrialization has been a special source of American discontent, particularly through interference with the upward urge innate in human beings.

Consider some of the effects on thought and feeling of the shifting of the population from rural to urban life—a shifting still under way as the extension of machine processes to agriculture lessens the vocational opportunities of agriculture for the small proprietor or tenant of the farm.

Few persons really appreciate how great the shifting has been and its rapidity since it was initiated by the application of steam and later of electricity to industrial purposes. In 1800 there were in all the United States only six cities with a population exceeding 8,000. Every decade since 1800 has witnessed a drift cityward, and a more rapid drift in each decade. In the ten year interval between the

census of 1920 and that of 1930 the urban population increased more than six times as fast as the rural. So that whereas, in 1800, ninety-six of every 100 Americans lived on farms or in places of less than 8,000 population, in some States to-day nearly everybody is a town or city dweller.

In Rhode Island, for example, according to the 1930 census, the urban population is more than 92 per cent. of the total population of the State; in Massachusetts, it is 90.2 per cent.; in New York, 83.6 per cent.; in New Jersey, 82.6 per cent.; in Illinois, almost 74 per cent. Even in New Hampshire, which we still fondly consider a rural State, the State of the old homestead, nearly 60 per cent. of the total population is urban.¹²

Willy nilly, as a consequence, most of us of the present generation and of the rising generation live, move, and have our being largely in crowds; and with every advance in means of transportation and in the organization and mechanization of industry, we more and more live in crowds. We daily go in crowds to our places of work and daily return from them in crowds. Often we do our work in the midst of a crowd. More than this, we have not only grown accustomed to being in crowds, but have so acquired the crowd habit that we even incline to take our recreation in crowds, and come together in crowds on the slightest provocation. If the progress through our streets of a candidate for the Presidency draws an enormous crowd, so does the homecoming of a triumphant World Series baseball team. The funeral of a moving-picture celebrity means a crowd almost as surely as does the marriage of a millionaire's daughter.

Naturally the question suggests itself, "Are we as individuals and as members of society affected at all, for better or for worse, by the crowd habit, by the mere fact of our living and working and playing more and more in crowds?" One thing is certain: that crowd thinking differs conspicuously from the thinking of individuals not exposed to the contagion of crowds. It has been said by an eminent personage that mankind in the mass does not think at all, merely feels. That, however, is not a quite accurate statement of crowd mentation as the psychologist sees it. Crowds, according to those psychologists who have most closely studied them, do think—only they incline to think either as children think or as primitive peoples. They need not, they do not always think as children or primitives. Note that I say, they incline to think that way. A good deal depends on the degree of education of the individuals composing the crowd, and a good deal more on the purpose with which they have assembled. Still, given

proper stimulus, crowd mentation is apt to develop even among the best educated.

For instance, a group of persons who have come together for the strictly intellectual purpose of hearing a scientific lecture, may be depended upon to remain a thoughtful, attentive audience, not a crowd, so long as the speaker confines himself to trying to meet their intellectual demand. But let him introduce something exceptionally disagreeable to them as members of a particular religious denomination or political party, and the crowd spirit is likely to develop in them, the spirit in which feeling unmistakably overrides thinking. When the assembling is for non-intellectual purposes, when those who assemble are not really well educated, then, naturally, the likelihood of the crowd spirit showing itself becomes all the greater.

And it is unfortunately a fact, substantiated by everyday observation, that with the growth of our cities occasions giving opportunity for feeling to override thinking draw the largest crowds. There never was a time when, for example, sporting events with the elements of conflict and potential gore, from prize fights to hockey matches, drew the crowds they are drawing even in this period of financial and economic depression. At such events, too, you are likely to see in full bloom the manifestations of crowd mentation and crowd behavior that drew from Everett Dean Martin the caustic observation, "A crowd is a device for indulging ourselves in a kind of temporary insanity by all going crazy together,"¹³ and Boris Sidis's still more caustic description of the crowd as an instrument through which the credulous, uncontrolled, savage, primitive self slumbering in the depths of the civilized self gains momentary expression.

Here, fragmentarily, are Sidis's own words describing the primitive self, or, as he calls it, the subwaking self. Only, bear in mind that what he thus names is not identical with the subconscious self, the subliminal self of other psychologists. Sidis refers more strictly to what some Freudians picturesquely term, the cave man in us:

"The subwaking self is stupid; it lacks all critical sense. . . . The subwaking self is extremely credulous; it lacks all sense of the true and rational. . . . The subwaking self is most suggestible, most imitative; it is blown hither and thither by all sorts of incoming suggestions. . . . The subwaking self is servile, cowardly, and devoid of scruple . . . ; it is essentially a brutal self."¹⁴

On first reading, one may be inclined to criticize this as extreme, exaggerated, an overstatement. But when one recalls the behavior of crowds in panics, in lynchings, in street riots, even in the excitement

of sporting events, the inclination to criticize dies down. Also the question comes to mind, "Does the primitive, subwaking self find expression only in crowds? Given an increasing tendency in any people to live, to work, to take their amusements, even to spend their holidays in crowds, is there not a danger that that people will little by little acquire more and more the spirit and the ways of the crowd, will become infected, so to speak, with crowd mentality, even with regard to their thinking as individuals?"

This question, it is to be feared, must be answered in the affirmative. What, unhappily, is more to the point is that in our own case there is not lacking evidence that crowd thinking is to-day the thinking of the great majority of our people when out of crowds as well as when in crowds.

One has only to read the daily newspapers to appreciate the truth of this. With some outstanding exceptions our newspapers cater, and increasingly cater, to crowd mentality. The crowd mind longs for novelty, for excitement; craves to be amused, to be startled, to be shocked; takes delight in the misfortunes of others. In response, we have the average daily newspaper with its lurid headlines, its superfluity of crime news, its retailing of scandal, its cheap gossip, its many pages devoted to sports, its vulgar, crude, so-called comic cuts. Even the advertisements that overburden newspaper pages and the pages of magazines are in many cases frankly designed to appeal to crowd mentality.

Be sure that this would not be the case unless the advertisers found it profitable. For the matter of that, not so long ago I came across a book, "What About Advertising?", in which the authors, Kenneth M. Goode and Harford Powel, Jr., marshalled evidence from psychological and business research, going to show that most advertisers even to-day are overrating the mentation of most of their prospective customers. As Mr. Goode and Mr. Powel see it, the "average" American of to-day is on the intelligence level of the normal twelve- or fourteen-year-old child, and advertisers must govern themselves accordingly if they wish to make effective appeals through the printed word.

Personally, I think Mr. Goode and Mr. Powel misuse the word, intelligence, as some psychologists themselves do. Personally, I am convinced that the native intelligence of the mass of the American people is not one whit below that of their forefathers. The trouble is that the crowd habit—and other influences on which I will touch—has impeded and lowered the mental activity of great multitudes of

people and has so diffused the crowd spirit that crowd thinking, with all its credulities, crudities, vulgarities, and brutalities has become widespread, to the growth directly and indirectly of discontent. For this our excessive industrialization, with its insistent shifting of the population from rural districts to herd in overgrown towns and cities, is largely to blame.

Our excessive industrialization, again, is to blame for a different but fully as harmful crowding—a crowding of life with things and with events. Especially during the past twenty-five years life has become so crowded with things that merely to enumerate the additional things brought into it during this period would require far more time than is at my disposal. Twenty-five years ago we had few of the extraordinary mechanical devices supposed to add to the comfort and ease of life but speeding it up and crowding it tremendously. And certainly we had next to none of the now never-ceasing propaganda designed to persuade us to evaluate things highly—designed indeed to persuade us that the more things we buy, at outright payment or on the instalment plan, the happier and better off we shall be.

Yet the plain truth is that things when made and pressed for sale in the enormous quantities of the present time, harmfully affect both those induced to buy them to excess and those who compete desperately, at times brutally, to sell them to excess. And the more science and invention add to the mountainous mass of things to be sold, the greater the threat to the human mind and spirit, the greater the breeding of discontent. So far has the competition to crowd life with things already progressed that many, I might fairly say the majority of business men, not only chronically wound their self-respect but give little real thought to anything outside of their particular occupation. Once, at a small luncheon gathering, I ventured to call this fact to the attention of those present, themselves mostly business men. For a moment there was a shocked silence, then one said:

"I'm afraid you're right. Lately I was traveling from New York to Chicago, and went to the smoking-compartment to enjoy a cigar. One other man was there. I greeted him, was answered pleasantly, and started, or attempted to start, a conversation. Every subject I brought up found him unresponsive. As I was about to give up, he turned to me, and, with an oddly pathetic look, quietly suggested, 'Try me with leather.'"

Here is one reason the art of conversation languishes to-day. Another is the influence of the crowd mentation already discussed.

People to all intents and purposes on a fourteen-year-old mental level, people who have the crowd habit, either agree thoughtlessly or disagree thoughtlessly, but do not readily converse on a variety of subjects in an interested or an interesting way. And the art of conversation suffers, as much else suffers, when people's attention is concentrated much of the time on the petty and the trivial and mere things. It needs no exhaustive research to determine that the attention of most persons to-day is concentrated most of the time on the petty and the trivial and mere things.

Crowding our lives with things, we necessarily tend to crowd them with events, with doings, if it be merely the looking at things, the selecting, rejecting, and buying of things, and the caring for the innumerable things with which we clutter our homes. Also we tend to crowd our lives with doings if only because of the decline in the art of thinking and the art of conversation.

Consider how most of us occupy our leisure. At work, we necessarily and rightly do. Free from work we equally, in many cases far more eagerly, give ourselves to doing. If we are poor company for ourselves and for one another, if we cannot converse in any really stimulating, satisfying way, we can at least play bridge, or dance, or go to the movies, the musical comedy, the hockey match, the prize fight, or other aid to passive amusement. Yet, by a cruel irony, the more desperately we seek satisfaction, seek joy in these, the greater the likelihood of our achieving boredom and discontent. To the point is a story told in *The Christian Century* concerning a drive taken by the teller of the story with a young business man:

"In the intimacy of the closed car, the driver began to talk of his home, his varied interests, his social experiences. He told, with enthusiasm, of the discovery which he and his wife had made of the satisfaction to be derived from spending evenings at home reading. 'We've come to the point,' he said, 'where we've just about exhausted the ways of having a good time. There's a crowd of us have played around together for years—gone to the theatre together, played cards together, danced together, all that sort of thing. The other night we were over at the home of one of the group. We started playing bridge, but after a couple of hands of that everybody had had enough. Then somebody turned on the radio, and we danced through a couple of numbers. And then we just sat and looked at each other, until finally Bill, who was the host, said, 'What the — shall we do now?'"¹⁵

Even those who have not succumbed to the self-centredness and materialism bred of the dominance of life by modern industry and

business, those who do think and intelligently converse and retain a rational idea of the meaning of existence, still in many cases make the mistake of overcrowding life with doing, though it be highly useful doing. Such persons have the excuse that presentday conditions—especially as outlined in our brief survey of the prevalence of social evils in the United States—incite, almost compel the socially-minded to uncommon activity. Within certain limits it undoubtedly is good for them as well as for society that they thus exert themselves. It is not good, either for them or for society, that they go to excess in well-doing. To them, as to the aimless pleasure-seekers and the ultra-eager business-doers so numerous in the United States of to-day, real personal harm results from the overcrowding of life with doings.

Though most of us seem to have forgotten this, life never was meant to be wholly a matter of doing, of accomplishing, however beneficial or useful the doing from a social point of view; just as it never was meant to be wholly or chiefly a matter of amusing oneself or of acquiring as much wealth or other material possessions as possible. Undeniably, to do, to play, and to acquire are activities springing from natural human impulses—from instincts with which man has been endowed for useful ends. But—here is the significant point—man has been endowed with other instincts too. If life is to be found truly satisfying these other instincts—such as, and particularly, the creative as distinct from the procreative instinct, the instinct to grow in knowledge, the instinct for the beautiful, the altruistic instinct, the religious instinct—must be given adequate opportunity for expression.

Here, it seems to me—in the narrowing down of life activities plus the crowding of life, both resulting in chief measure from our excessive industrialization—are to be found the main sources of the discontent which gains such varied expression in our burden of social evils. Even the work in which most of us engage for the earning of a livelihood—the work of specialized tending or feeding of machines, the work of specialized distribution of machine-made products, the work of a routine clerkism—usually means a direct thwarting and repressing of at least one major instinct, the creative. This would not be so bad if we made it a point to give this instinct some opportunity for expression in our leisure hours. But most of us fail to do this—as most of us fail to give anything like adequate expression to the instinct to grow in knowledge, the instinct for the beautiful, the altruistic instinct, and the religious instinct.

So life becomes for great numbers—subconsciously if not consciously—a medley of discontent and of the demoralization born of

surrender to the crowd spirit. Literally, we become sick of soul, and our soul sickness shows itself in the ugly symptomatology of the restlessness, nervousness, mental collapse, alcoholism, drug addiction, divorce, and suicide that are grim and growing features of the national life. How true it is that, in the main, these are rooted in our narrow, unbalanced, and materialistic mode of living, is evinced by the brilliant therapeutic results again and again obtained through psychological and spiritual methods of treatment of cases that have not taken the final flight from discontent to suicide.

Those cured are not cured merely because their thoughts have been turned from self, but because they have been aided to a better philosophy, and aided to more balanced living through the satisfaction of some instinctive tendency that had been left unsatisfied. Nor does one have to go to the case-books of psychological and spiritual therapists for indications of the discontent-preventing value of a life thus balanced. The joy in living displayed by the folk of Old World lands not as yet excessively industrialized has long been cause for remark by visitors from the New World. Their "standard of living," as the politicians phrase it, is distinctly below ours, they lack most of the "conveniences" of our highly industrialized land, they have long working-days largely at hand labor. Somehow they seem to get out of life much that the mass of our people fail to get.

Study them for a while, go with them into their cathedrals and churches, join them in their folk festivals, gain some knowledge of their philosophy of life, and the conviction will grow that their freer response to instinctive urgings—including especially the religious instinct and the instinct for the beautiful—is what most of all enables them to find greater joy in living. Recall, if you please, William McDougall's statement:

"The instincts are the prime movers of all human activity; by the conative or impulsive force of some instinct, every train of thought, however cold and passionless it may seem, is borne along toward its end, and every bodily activity is initiated and sustained. The instinctive impulses determine the ends of all activities and supply the driving power by which all mental activities are sustained; and all the complex intellectual apparatus of the most highly developed mind is but the instrument by which these impulses seek their satisfactions, while pleasure and pain do but serve to guide them in their choice of the means. . . . These impulses are the mental forces that maintain and shape all the life of individuals and societies, and in them we are confronted with the central mystery of life and mind and will."¹⁶

Holding to this, it is only logical that McDougall should insist, "The first chapter of any useful psychology, whether normal or morbid, must be a study of the instinctive nature of the species *homo sapiens*."¹⁷ Not all psychologists, not all sociologists, are of McDougall's belief. So far is his view from being universally accepted that some psychologists endeavor to dispense with instinct entirely, or almost entirely, in their explanations of why human beings behave as they do. Nevertheless, and particularly since the exploring of the obscure realm of the subconscious, an exploring begun by Pierre Janet and continued by Sigmund Freud, Boris Sidis, Morton Prince, McDougall himself and numerous other investigators, the supreme importance of reckoning with the instinctive nature of man in dealing with the ills and problems of society as of the individual, would seem to be soundly established. Until we have such reckoning, not by scientists alone, but still more by statesmen, educators, and industrial leaders themselves, we need not hope for the formulation of policies that will be effective in lessening American discontent.

The remedies commonly tried or proposed—such as prohibitive and punitive legislation, and action to bring about a more equitable distribution of the national wealth—leave the real need untouched.

A more equitable distribution of wealth would, obviously, weaken the influence of poverty as a source of discontent; and is fast becoming a necessity if our industrialists wish to continue mass production of manufactured goods on the scale of recent years. After all, the consumptive abilities of a millionaire are pretty limited so far as the personal use of manufactured goods is concerned; and, with Federal Trade Commission figures indicating that 13 per cent of the people own 90 per cent of the wealth,¹⁸ it is hard to see how mass distribution of mass-produced goods can much longer be maintained satisfactorily in the absence of a foreign trade that it may be somewhat difficult to regain. But, as it has been my special endeavor to show, the problem of discontent goes far beyond financial and economic considerations. It is precisely because financial and economic considerations have been allowed to determine national thought and national policy that discontent has become the urgent problem it is in the United States of to-day.

That it has become a problem quite beyond solution I am not prepared to concede, though well aware of the difficulties of solution in a land where national programs and policies rest ultimately on the decision of a majority infused with the crowd spirit and on a fourteen-year-old level of mental activity. Still, the ultra-suggestibility of the

crowd spirit may itself be used to contribute to acceptance of a wiser philosophy of life than that summed up in making money, spending money, and amusing oneself. Admittedly it is a Herculean undertaking to attempt to change a people's philosophy. But it can be done, for in the memory of many still living it has actually been done in the case of at least two peoples, the people of Germany and the people of Japan; in the former case to the hurt, in the latter thus far to the gain, of the people involved. In both cases intensive education of a far-spreading sort was the agency employed, and would have to be the agency employed to bring about the changed national philosophy needful for a lessening of discontent in the United States.

Into this further question of the possibilities and means of successful solution of the problem I cannot now go. In the time available I have, in fact, been able to present only in the baldest outline the major sources, as I see them, of the discontent that, with every passing year, adds to the population of our prisons, our hospitals for the nervously and mentally wrecked, our refuges for alcoholics and drug addicts; that overwhelms with business our criminal courts and our divorce courts; that takes a mounting toll in suicide; and also a mounting toll, though hitherto I have not mentioned this, in lives shortened by bodily diseases promoted, if not actually caused, by discontented states of mind.

Often one hears it said that the average life-expectation to-day is longer than it was a hundred, fifty, even twenty-five years ago. This is true only in so far as the expectation has been favorably affected by medical measures lessening the mortality among children and youths. It distinctly is not true with regard to the ages beyond fifty. As revealed by a statistical study undertaken by Professor C. H. Forsyth, of Dartmouth College, the life-expectation trend of the fifties and later is now unmistakably downward. "The expectation from age forty-five or fifty on," is the way Professor Forsyth puts it, writing in a 1929 issue of *Science*, "is the lowest of which we have any record—far lower than it was even forty years ago—and it still is going down, not up."

And, from Professor Forsyth also, by way of explanatory comment: "To me, the whole picture, from our earliest records in 1890 to the present time, points consistently and inevitably to a future of a declining average length of life until the American adult wakes up to the fact that the odds are at present heavily against his living as long as his father or grandfather. Some will say—and no doubt truly—that it is all a natural consequence of the great drift to the

cities. Others will go farther and say life has become too fast and strenuous, and that we do not know as yet how to adjust ourselves to such a life.

"To the medical authorities the whole problem will loom as one of relieving the strain upon the heart. But little will be accomplished until the American adult himself is duly informed and made to realize that he is in the midst of a decidedly losing fight, and that the situation will continue unless he applies himself energetically to be superior to his environment. . . . There is surely no worse influence than that wielded by well-meaning authorities who go around airing their ill-founded beliefs that all is going fine and that before long everybody is going to be living seventy-five or a hundred years."¹⁹

This, as stated, was written in 1929. Speaking as recently as December, 1931, in an address to the American Statistical Association in convention at Washington, Mr. Rollo H. Britten, statistician of the United States Public Health Service, declared to similar effect:

"Figures on sickness and death in this country since its first settlement show the reduction in mortality has come entirely at the younger age levels. Within the last thirty years this reduction has been phenomenal, but has only pertained to ages below fifty years. Because the United States has been a nation of young people, the trend of mortality in those ages has largely determined that for all ages. Even compared to ancient times, our present expectation of life at the higher ages is not favorable. . . . Ancient Rome showed an expectation at birth of about twenty-one years, against ours of about fifty-five years; but as age advanced the difference rapidly decreased, until from age sixty on the Roman expectation was definitely above that of to-day."

If only from the point of view of gaining greater length of life for the individual, changes in the prevalent modes of thinking and of living are unmistakably in order. And, above all, as the evidence from the social evils goes to emphasize, the American people need to regain their lost sense of proportion as regards life's values and life's goods. It is not a question merely for theoretical consideration, this question of discontent in the United States. It is a question that bears directly on the larger question of national survival. By some means the people must be brought to a saner philosophy, a more rational, a better balanced mode of living, or the time will surely come when we shall justify the Spenglerian prediction and go the way of ancient Babylon and Rome.

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